

PRESS RELEASE

Nandita Das & Maithili Rao join eminent film writers on the Advisory Council for *New Voices Fellowship for Screenwriters*, a program launched by Asia Society

July 11, 2011, Mumbai: Nandita Das and Maithili Rao unite with Dev Benegal, Saket Chaudhary and Jaideep Sahni as a part of the Advisory Council led by Anjum Rajabali for the *New Voices Fellowship for Screenwriters* initiated by Asia Society. Bunty Chand and Rachel Cooper of Asia Society are also members of the Advisory Council. It is a program to identify and support a group of six talented independent screenwriters to develop their feature film scripts by working in a dynamic and innovative environment with guidance from eminent filmmakers and screenwriters. The project mentors are the likes of Ashwini Malik, Sriram Raghavan and Vinay Shukla. Screenwriters, existing and aspiring, from across the country can feel free to submit an original story for consideration between **July 11 and August 31, 2011**.

Time Warner is the Founding Sponsor of the *New Voices Fellowship for Screenwriters*.

"We are delighted to launch the New Voices Fellowship for Screenwriters. This initiative, coordinated by Asia Society's offices in New York and India, represents Asia Society's commitment to fostering creativity and nurturing new talent whether it be Asia Society's commitment to young leaders, women or in this instance, New Voices in Screen Writing," says Bunty Chand, Executive Director of Asia Society India Centre.

This fellowship is an opportunity for screenwriters who are seeking to write powerful, nuanced and well-crafted scripts and at the same time trying to explore new approaches to the art of writing for cinema. The *New Voices Fellowship for Screenwriters* will select through an open application process, six screenwriters from across India for a year-long fellowship. Selected fellows will have a rare opportunity to work with eminent screenwriters to develop their scripts and to attend two 5 day long workshops and produce one finished script.

Asia Society recognizes India's exceptional legacy in the field of cinema. At the same time, many screenwriters are seeking to develop their skills and explore new directions. After a year-long exploration with film makers, writers, educators, film festival directors including Anjum Rajabali, head of the department of Screenplay Writing in the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) and Whistling Woods International, Rachel Cooper, Director of Cultural Programs and Performing Arts, Asia Society, and George Jose of Asia Society India Centre developed a unique fellowship program which includes workshops, mentoring, peer feedback and a modest stipend.

Each participating fellow will receive:

- A stipend of **Rs.1,00,000**
- Regular mentoring from noted screenwriters/directors (see Mentors list) toward the completion of feature script
- **Two 5 day** long intensive workshops led by industry professionals and with active participation from peers in a learning community
- Recommendations on developing contacts and approaches to taking their scripts to the next phase, conceptualizing strategies and approaches to finding producers, directors, distributors

and festivals.

About Asia Society:

Asia Society is the leading global and pan-Asian organization working to strengthen relationships and promote understanding among the people, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the United States. We seek to increase knowledge and enhance dialogue, encourage creative expression, and generate new ideas across the fields of arts and culture, policy and business, and education. The Society was founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller the 3rd.

Asia Society India Centre is a part of Asia Society's global network of 11 offices. The India Centre is a not-for-profit, non partisan institution inaugurated by PM Dr. Manmohan Singh in 2006. The India Centre is a key forum for intra-Asian connections and exchange and has conceptualized and curated over 250 events in the past 5 years. We have a strong and growing list of members, patrons and corporate supporters.

The India Centre is fortunate to have Pheroza Godrej (Cymroza Art Gallery), Sangita Jindal (Jindal Foundation), Sunil Mehta (Tata AIG), Falguni Nayar (Kotak), Rashmi Poddar (Jnanapravaha), Jai Shroff (United Phosphorus) and Rajiv Singh (DLF) on its Board of Directors. Purnendu Chatterjee (TCG) serves as the Chairman of the Board.

The India Centre has been privileged to host Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, Planning Commission Chairman Dr. M. S. Ahluwalia, former White House National Economic Council Director Dr. Lawrence Summers, President of Brandeis University Dr. Joshua Reinharz, and Co-Founder of Ebay Pierre Omidyar, among others.

For more information on New Voices Fellowship for Screenwriters, please visit

<http://asiasociety.org/centers/india>

For more information please contact:

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BIOS

ADVISORY COUNCIL:

- **Anjum Rajabali** is the head of the department of Screenplay Writing in the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) and Whistling Woods International. From *Drohkaal* to his most recent *Raajneeti*, Anjum Rajabali has created a niche and new standard for powerful screenplay writing in Hindi Cinema. He has scripted films like *Ghulam*, *Pukar*, *The Legend of Bhagat Singh* and many more. His latest film, *Aarakshan*, is due for release in August 2011. Anjum has recently been appointed as a member to the Central Board of Film Certification.
- **Dev Benegal** is a director, screenwriter and producer most known for his debut film *English, August*, which won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in English. His second film *Split Wide Open* (1999) premiered at the Venice International Film festival; Dev Benegal's work represents modern Indian cinema which is distinct from the realist or popular traditions of Indian cinema. His most recent work is *Road, Movie*. In addition to his directing career, Benegal is acknowledged as a pioneer in digital technology - having created 24x7 Making Movies and has produced over 60 short feature films. Cannes and Variety have acclaimed his films.
- **Saket Chaudhary** is a writer- director; He began his career as a writer with *Movers and Shakers*. He has written and directed two popular television shows *Kyon Hota Hai Pyar* and *Dil Kya Chahta Hai*. His Film *Pyar ke Side Effects* received much acclaim and many awards. Saket is currently casting for his next film, *Shaadi ke Side Effects* produced by Pritish Nandy Communications.
- **Nandita Das** is an actor and filmmaker. She has acted in over 30 feature films in ten different languages with many eminent directors. *Firaaq*, her directorial debut feature film premiered in Toronto and has travelled to many festivals. She was a member of the jury at the Cannes Film Festival in 2005, among other reputed International film festivals. The French government bestowed the award of *Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters*, a very prestigious civil award on her. Nandita is currently the Chairperson of the Children's Film Society, India.
- **Maithili Rao** is a Mumbai based freelance film critic. She has written extensively for Indian and international publications including *South Asian Cinema*, *Man's World*, *Hindu*, *Frontline*, *Cinema In India*, *Film Comment*, *International Film Guide* and *British Film Institute* website. Maithili Rao has served as member of Fipresci jury at Sochi, Mumbai International Film Festival, and International Children's Film Festival. In addition, Rao has contributed her writings to *Encyclopaedia Britannica India* volume on Hindi cinema, *Bollywood*, Dakini Publications, London and Amitabh Bachchan for *Icons*, Roli Press, India.
- **Jaideep Sahni** is one of Bollywood's most prolific scriptwriters. He has written notable films of the recent past including *Company*, *Khosla ka Ghosla*, *Chak de India* and *Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year*. Always trying to push boundaries and broaden horizons for storytelling, Jaideep has the uncanny knack to resurrect the common man through his stories, which brings great resonance and reaches out to a large spectrum of people. He is also a noted lyricist.

MENTORS:

- **Ashwini Malik** is a screenplay, dialogue writer and independent filmmaker. His work includes films like *I Am, Sorry, Bhai!*, *Road Movie*, *Bas Ek Pal* and *Clever and Lonely*. He has taught at his alma mater FTII, and currently teaches at Whistling Woods International, Mumbai. He has also been mentor at many screenwriting workshops in India and abroad.
- **Sriram Raghavan** is a director and screenwriter. Sriram's films reflect a strong tradition of Film Noir which is a delightful addition to narratives in Hindi cinema, his most recent work, *Johnny Gaddar*, being a striking example. His work includes films like *Ek Hasina Thi*, and *Agent Vinod* (unreleased).
- **Vinay Shukla** is a screenplay writer and director and his film *Godmother* won six National Awards. He has conducted scriptwriting workshops in Lucknow, at the Satyajit Ray Film Institute, Kolkata and was a mentor at Maisha (Mira Nair's organization), Kampala in 2006. Vinay Shukla lectures at the Screenplay Writing course at the FTII Pune, which he helped set up in 2004, and also at Whistling Woods International. His most recent written & directed film *Mirch*, released in 2010.

Key Asia Society Individuals involved with NVFS:

- **Bunty Chand** is the Executive Director of Asia Society India Centre. Ms. Chand is overseeing the development of Asia Society India Centre and is responsible for fundraising, development of diverse programs and establishing relationships and building support for the Centre with a broad array of corporate and institutions in India. She spent ten years with AT&T in USA and Hong Kong in the areas of Strategy & Business Development, Human Resources, and Training & Development. She has lived and worked in the US, Philippines, Hong Kong and Singapore.
- **Rachel Cooper** is Director of Culture and Performing Arts at the Asia Society. Ms Cooper has presented and curated films from India, Indonesia, China, Iran, Japan, Korea, Thailand as well as producing and presenting performances from throughout Asia. She has co-sponsored and presented various film festivals and film series at the Asia Society, including *Iranian Documentary and Short Film Festival*, the *Asian American International Film Festival*, *IAAC India Film Festival* among others. She has organized major arts and culture initiatives including, *Festival of Song: Music of India and Pakistan*; *Creative Voices of Islam in Asia*, *Festival of Indonesia*, *Dance the Spirit of Cambodia*. She has conducted and published research on international impact of the arts which resulted in a report *Making a Difference through the Arts*. In 2006 she was awarded the *Dawson Award for Sustained Excellence in Arts Programming*.